A CAPTAIN IN THE RANKS

By George Carey Eggleston

SYNOPSIS.

Captain Guilford Duncan, C. S. A., takes part in the last fight, at Appomattox, and leaves the army. He then determines to go to Cairo, Ill. Although well educated and a lawyer, Captain Duncan is without family or money, and works his passage to Cairo. Here he saves Captain Hallam's cotton from fire, and Captain Hallam, a modern "captain of industry," hires Captain Duncan, and quickly advances in his employer's estimation. He saves Captain Hallam's coal fleet from destruction by a storm, and is made a partner by Captain Hallam. The young man becomes a force of good among the young men of Cairo. Barbara Verne, a young lady, runs the boarding house in which Captain Duncan takes his meals. Captain Duncan is thanked by Barbara for saving her from annoyance by mischievous boys. He determines to call upon her.

CHAPTER XIII.

GUILFORD DUNCAN carried out his purpose, as he thought, with a good deal of tact. He began by calling not upon Barbara, but upon three or four other young women—a thing he had never done before. He thought in this way to make his call upon Barbara, when it should come, an inconspicuous event. To his surprise, his entrance thus into society created something of a flutter among the women folk, especially the married women who had marriageable daughters or who were matchmakingly interested in other young women not their daughters; for Guilford Duncan, the moment he was thought of as a social factor and a matrimonial possibility, was seen to be the "best catch" in the little city, the most desirable young man in the town. He was young and distinctly handsome. He was a man of education, culture and superior intelligence. His manners were easy, polished and very winning. Especially he treated women with a certain chivalric deference that pleased them even more than they knew. Captain Will Hallam's wife, who was the social leader of the city, said to him one day:

"You must be careful what you do in the way of paying attention to young women. A very little attention on your part is apt to mean a great deal to a girl—and still more to her mamma."

"But why should it?" asked Duncan in unfeigned astonishment. "Why should ordinary social courtesy on my part mean more than the same thing means in the case of any other young man?"

"I don't know that I can tell you," she answered. "At least I don't know that I can make you understand."

"I sincerely wish you would try. I certainly do not want to"— He hesitated and did not complete the sentence.

"Oh, I know all that. I know what you mean, because it is what I mean. I tell you that if you pay more than just a little and a very casual attention to any girl, the girl and, worse still, all her elderly female relatives are likely to misconstrue your motives. You are in serious danger of breaking some tender hearts and winning for yourself the reputation of being that most detestable thing—a male flirt."

"But really, Mrs. Hallam," interrupted the perplexed young man, "I don't understand. I have not called more than twice upon any one girl, and"—

"Well, don't. That's all I've got to say."

Duncan went away puzzled. He had intended to be very shrewd and circumspect in this matter. He had intended by calling once or twice upon each of several young women to deprive the calls he intended to make upon Barbara of any look of significance, and now before he had even begun to cultivate acquaintance with Barbara he found his small preparatory callings the subject of curiosity and gossip.

He was resolved not to be balked of his purpose, however. He saw no reason to permit that. He would go that very evening to see Barbara, and he would repeat the visit from time to time until a fuller acquaintance with the girl should cure him of his fascination. Acquaintance must do that, he was persuaded.

Barbara Verne was not accustomed to receive visits from young men. She was almost too young, for one thing, or at least she had been almost too young until about this time. Moreover, her life was unusually secluded. She devoted all her time to her exacting household duties. Except that she attended church once each Sunday, she was never seen in any public place or anywhere else outside of her aunt's house or the house of her single friend, Mrs. Richards, a retiring matron, who neither received company nor went out anywhere. These two—the young girl and the middle aged matron—were somewhat more than intimate in their affection, but apart from this one friend Barbara visited nobody. The young women of the town did not think of her, therefore, as one of themselves at all. They regarded her rather as a child than as a young woman, though if they had troubled to think about the matter they would have remembered that she was as old as some of themselves.

When Guilford Duncan made his first call upon Barbara, therefore, that young person was very greatly astonished, but she was in no way embarrassed. It was her nature to meet all circumstances and all events frankly and to do with conscientious faithfulness whatsoever she conceived to be her duty. So when Guilford Duncan called upon her she promptly put away her surprise and walked into the parlor and greeted her visitor not without some lingering trace of surprise at the honor done her, but with no touch of foolish embarrassment in her manner. Barbara was simply her own sweet, natural self, and when Duncan went away after his call the glamour of her personality was more strongly upon him than ever.

"She, at least," he thought as he walked toward the levee, "will not misconstrue my call, as Mrs. Hallam suggests. She is too womanly, too sincere, too genuine, for that. I shall call again very soon, though, now that I think of it, she forgot to ask me to do so. Never mind. I'll manufacture some excuse—oh, by Jove, I have it! 'The Coterie' is to give a fancy dress dance a week from tonight. I'll invite her to go. I wonder if she will accept. I hope so, but even if she doesn't the invitation will give me ample excuse for calling. I'll do it tomorrow evening."

When Duncan called upon Barbara the next evening and asked her to attend the dance under his escort her astonishment was manifest in spite of her best endeavors to conceal it. She had never before been invited to such a function, and she had not dreamed of this. That, however, was not her greatest occasion for surprise. In her modesty she had never thought of herself as in any way the fellow or equal of the other girls in town, who were eagerly invited to attend everything in the way of entertainments. If any other young man in town had asked her to be his partner on this occasion she would have regarded the occurrence as a surprising one. To be asked by Guilford Duncan was more astonishing than all. She knew the high place he had won for himself in Cairo. She knew that he was everywhere regarded as altogether the superior of all the other young men intellectually, morally, socially and in all other ways. She regarded him as an aristocrat among men, a man who had always held aloof from the society around him, as if it were quite unworthy of his attention. She had woman's instinct enough, too, to know how greatly honored any other girl in the city would feel if asked by him to any function. The fact that he had asked her instead of some other puzzled her almost to bewilderment.

At first she gave him no answer. She was obviously thinking, and Duncan let her think on. He thought she looked exceedingly pretty while thinking. He observed a slight puckering of her forehead at the time, which seemed to him to add interest to her face. After a little she said:

"Thank you, Mr. Duncan, for your invitation. I am more pleased with it than I can say. But I think I must ask you to excuse me. I think I can't possibly go to the dance."

"May I ask why not? Do you not care for dancing and society?"

"Oh, I care very much, or, rather," she added with scrupulous fidelity to truth, "I should care very much to attend this party. I should enjoy it more than anything, but"—

"Will you think me impertinent," Duncan asked when she thus stopped in the middle of her sentence—"will you think me impertinent if I ask you what comes after that word 'but?'"

"Oh, I think you mustn't ask me that. At least I think I mustn't answer you."

"Very well," replied the young man, pleased with the girl's manner in spite of his disappointment over her hesitation. "May I make a suggestion? If you had simply said 'no' to my invitation, of course I should not think of urging it upon you. But what you have said shows me that you would welcome it if there were not something in the way. Perhaps you can overcome the difficulty. Will you not try? Will you not take a little time to think and perhaps to consult with your friends?"

"I should like to, but that would be unfair to you. It might deprive you of an opportunity to ask some one else."

"I shall ask no one else. I shall not attend the affair at all unless I am privileged to escort you. If I may I will call tomorrow evening and every evening until you can give me your decision."

There was a certain masterfulness in his manner and utterance which seemed to leave no chance for further discussion. So Barbara simply said:

"Very well. I'll be ready to answer you tomorrow evening. I suppose I am ready now, but you wish me to wait, and it shall be so."

Duncan hurriedly took his leave. Perhaps he feared that if he stayed longer the girl might make her "no" a final one. Otherwise he hoped for a better outcome.

When he had gone poor little Bab sat for a time in bewilderment. She still could not understand why such a man as Guilford Duncan, whom everybody regarded as the "coming man" in Cairo, should have chosen her instead of some other as the recipient of his invitation. She could not still a certain fluttering about her heart. She was full of joy, and yet she was sorely grieved that she must put aside what seemed to her a supreme opportunity to be happy for a time.

It was always her way when any emotion pleased or troubled her to go to her friend, Mrs. Richards, for strength and soothing. So now she suddenly sprang up, put on her hat and wraps and hurried to her one friend's home. The distance was so small that she needed no escort, particularly as Robert, who happened to be at the gate, could see her throughout the little journey. And she knew that the faithful negro boy would wait there until her return.

"You are all in a flurry, child," said her friend for greeting. "What is it about? Do you come to me for advice, or sympathy, or consolation?"

For Mrs. Richards knew of Duncan's visit, and with a shrewd woman's wit she guessed that Barbara's disturbance of mind was in some way connected with that event.

"No," answered the girl. "I didn't come to consult you, at least I think I didn't. It is only that something has happened, and I want to tell you about it."

"Very well, dear. Go on."

"Oh, it's nothing very important. Only that Mr. Guilford Duncan has asked me to go with him to the party next week."

"Well, go on. I see nothing strange in that."

"Why, don't you understand? It is Mr. Duncan, and he has asked me."

"I see nothing yet to wonder at," calmly replied her friend. "Indeed, it seems to be quite natural. I have understood Mr. Duncan to be a gentleman of uncommonly good taste. If he has made up his mind to attend the dance, why shouldn't he choose for his partner the best, the dearest, the most charming girl in the city? Of course you are going?"

"Why, no. Of course I can't. I told him so, but he urged me to postpone a

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final decision till tomorrow evening. I thought that would be useless and that the delay might make him miss a chance to engage some other girl, but he insisted that he wasn't going at all unless I would go with him; so just because he seemed to wish it I promised to wait till tomorrow evening before saying a final 'no.' Somehow you simply have to do what Mr. Duncan wants you to do, you know."

"Mr. Guilford Duncan is rising rapidly in my estimation," answered Barbara's friend. "I have understood that he is a man of good sense and good taste. Obviously he deserves that high repute. Your 'no' must be 'yes,' Bab."

"Oh, but that's impossible!"

"I don't see it."

"Why, you know I can't afford a gown."

"I still don't see it. It's to be a fancy dress affair, I believe?"

"Yes, of course."

"Then you can go in any character you like. You've your drab gray dress, and it's as fresh as new. I'll go over to your house and alter it for you. Then, with a white cape of bishop's lawn and a white cap and apron, we'll make you into the most charming little Quaker maiden imaginable. The character will just suit you because you suit it. That matter is settled. Go home now and go to bed, and you mustn't dream of anything but 'yes.'"

So the good woman fended off thanks and sent the happy girl home with an enhanced sense of the value of friendship.

CHAPTER XIV.

IT was about this time that Guilford Duncan managed to make a new enemy and one more powerful to work him harm upon occasion than all the rest whom he had offended.

Napoleon Tandy, president of the X National bank, whose name had been first popularly shortened to "Nap" Tandy and afterward extended again into "Napper" Tandy, was the only man in Cairo who had enough of financial strength or of creative business capacity to be reckoned a rival of Captain Will Hallam or his competitor in commercial enterprises.

He had several times tried conclusions with Hallam in such affairs, but always with results distinctly unsatisfactory to himself, or, as Hallam one day explained to Duncan, "He has got a good deal of education at my hands, and he has paid his tuition fees."

Tandy was not yet past middle age, but he was always called "Old Napper Tandy," chiefly because of certain objectionable traits of character that he possessed. He was reputed to be the "meanest man in southern Illinois." He was certainly the hardest in driving a bargain, the most merciless in its enforcement. He was cordially hated and very greatly feared. Cold, self possessed, shrewd and utterly selfish, his attitude toward his fellow men and toward himself was altogether different from that of his greater competitor, Hallam. He felt none of Hallam's "sporting interest," as Duncan called it, in playing the game of commerce and finance. He was quick to see opportunities and somewhat bold in seizing upon them, but no thought of popular or public benefit to accrue from his enterprises ever found lodgment in his mind. He had put a large sum of money into the through line of freight cars, but he had done so with an eye single to his own advantage, with no thought of anything but dividends. He had contemptuously called Duncan "a rainbow chaser" because that young man had spoken with some enthusiasm of the benefits which the cheapening of freight rates must bring to the people east and west.

In brief, Napper Tandy was a very greedy money getter and nothing else. He hated Hallam with all that he had of heart because Hallam was his superior in the conduct of affairs and because Hallam had so badly beaten him in every case of competitive effort and perhaps because of some other things.

On his part Will Hallam, without hating, cordially detested the man whom he had thus beaten and made afraid.

Nevertheless these two never quarreled. Each of them was too worldly wise to make an open breach with one whose co-operation in great affairs he might at any time need.

On the night of the ball Hallam took Duncan aside and said to him:

"I wish you'd take the 7 o'clock train in the morning and go up to the mines for a few days. Everything there seems to be at sixes and sevens. I can't make head or tail out of it all. All I know is that the confounded mine is losing a good many thousands of my dollars every month. I want you to go up and make a thorough investigation. If you can't find a way out I'll shut up the hole in the ground and quit."

Captain Hallam knew, of course, that Duncan could not get much sleep that night, but he had long ago learned that Guilford Duncan utterly disregarded personal comfort whenever duty called, and so he had no hesitation in thus ordering his young lieutenant to take an early morning train on the heels of a night of dancing.

"Perhaps you'd better go up there with me," suggested Duncan.

"No. That would embarrass matters. I've been up several times, and I want you to bring a fresh mind to bear upon the trouble. I'll telegraph the people there to put everything at your command. I want you to study the situation and make up your mind, just as if the whole thing belonged to you. Part of it does, you know, and more of it shall if you find a way out. If the thing can be made to go I'll give you ten more of the hundred shares in addition to the five you already own. Good night and goodby till you're ready to report."

Captain Will Hallam had recently bought this coal mine on a little branch railroad in the interior of Illinois. He had not wanted to buy it, but had done so by way of saving a debt. The mine had been badly constructed at the beginning, and latterly it had been a good deal neglected. There were other difficulties, as Duncan soon discovered, and the coal resources of the property had never been half developed. In recognition of his services in examining titles and other matters connected with the purchase Hallam had given the young man 5 per cent of the company's stock. He was thus for the first time working in part for himself when he was sent to study the situation.

Quietly, but insistently, in face of the surly opposition of the superintendent, who was also styled chief engineer, Duncan looked into things. It was true, as the superintendent sullenly said, that this young man knew nothing of coal mining. But it was also true, as Duncan answered, that he knew how to learn.

And he did learn. He learned so much that after three or four days he sent a telegram to Captain Will Hallam, saying:

Give me a perfectly free hand here or call me home. I must have all the authority you possess or I can be of no use. Answer by telegraph.

For response Hallam telegraphed:

Consider yourself the whole thing. I give you complete and absolute authority. Hire or discharge men at will. Order all improvements you think best. Draw on the bank here for any sum you need. Only make the thing go if you can.

Thus armed Duncan set to work in earnest.

"Why isn't your output of coal larger than it is?" he asked of Davidson, the superintendent.

"I can't make it larger under the circumstances."

"What are the circumstances? What difficulties are there in the way? You have miners enough surely."

"Well, for one thing the mine is badly ventilated. Many of the best galleries are filled with choke damp and must be kept closed."

"Why don't you improve the ventilation? As an engineer you ought to know how to do that much."

"It isn't feasible, as you would know, Mr. Duncan, if you knew anything about mining."

"Oh, never mind my ignorance! It is your knowledge that I'm concerned about just now. Do I understand you to say that a mine lying only seventy-five feet or so below the surface cannot be ventilated?"

"I suppose it might be if the business could afford the expense."

"The business can and will afford any expense that may be necessary to make it pay. If you know enough of engineering to devise a practicable plan for ventilating the mine I'll furnish you all the money you need to carry it out."

He had it in mind to add, "If you don't know enough for that I'll find a more competent engineer," but he kept his temper and refrained.

"'Twouldn't be of any use," answered Davidson after a moment. "We're

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FINE NEW THEATRE

Some of the Excellent Points of It's Construction.

R. E. ELVERS THE NEW LESSEE

Messrs. Fisher Brothers Will Improve Largely on the Old Opera House—More Seating Capacity—Bigger Stage—Safety Devices.

Tomorrow Contractor C. G. Palmberg will commence the dismantling of the fire-wreck of Fishers' opera house, preparatory to the building of the new house of entertainment upon the same site. This marks an important era in Astoria's development, as the new house will cost, when completed and equipped in the neighborhood of $14,000. R. E. Elvers, of Salt Lake City, will be superintendent of construction and is an experienced man in affairs theatrical.

Mr. Elvers yesterday, as a primal move, consulted with Fire Chief Foster, the same as being within the municipal requirements; but he could not reach all members of the city committee on fire and water, and this phase of the situation will be attended to at the next session of the common council.

The plans and specifications recently adopted by the Messrs. Fisher, show the following conditions in and about the new structure:

There will be six exits from the gallery floor of the house, embracing 19 feet of open stairway. The ground floor exits will cover 24½ feet of width-space; the main doorway being 10 feet on the plans and specifications of the new building and that officer approved the ground-plan, they will be, practically, as in the old house.

The house is to be equipped with a handsomely appointed reception room for ladies, and a competent woman will be placed in charge of it to assist patrons and look after their wraps, etc.; and besides this, there will be a smoking-room for gentlemen.

There will be two separate, distinct box-offices, for the sale of gallery tickets and for the accommodation of the ground-floor patrons, thus avoiding all confusion and obviating much delay in despatching big crowds.

The stage opening will be 30 feet wide by 24 feet in height, the stage being 30 feet in depth. These dimensions will permit the setting of drop-scenes 24 by 42 feet in size and aid materially in the presentation of the finest plays requiring the use of extensive scenery. The orchestra pit will be large enough to comfortably seat an orchestra of seven people and all instruments.

The electrical service is to be very complete, and involves a tone-set of lights of red and blue and white, to lend efficacy to certain scenes on the stage; the whole system comprehending nearly 900 lights throughout.

The house will contain exactly 948 seats, and each seat is to be 20 inches wide, which ensures plenty of comfort for each individual patron. When the seats are closed there will be 30 inches of row-space, or passage way, in front of each seat.

Every modern appliance will be employed for the prevention of fire, standpipes, hose-reels, electric alarms of the latest and best patterns; and the ventilation of the building will be adapted to the control and absorption of fire along the stage, so as to keep the auditorium free from smoke and flames. Nothing will be left undone to make it one of the prettiest, safest and most comfortable houses of the kind on the coast; and when it is thrown open to the Astoria public on or about the first of October next, it will be a monument to the generous enterprise of its owners and projectors, Messrs. A. C. and F. A. Fisher of this city.

The initial performance at the new opera house will, in all likelihood, be one of the popular comic operas that are so well appreciated on the coast circuit, the northwestern circuit managers having promised to bill one here at that time if it shall be available.

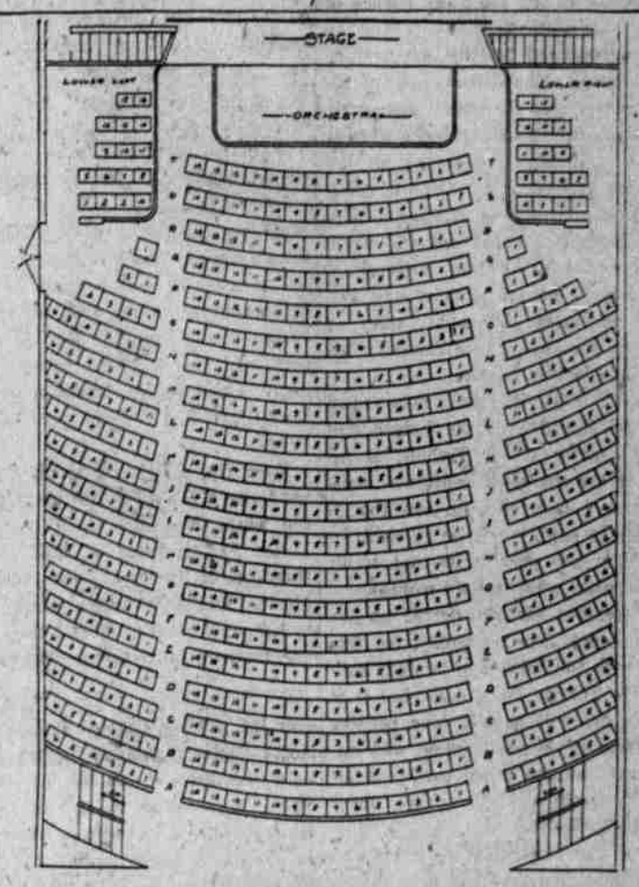

Diagram showing seating arrangement of lower floor of the new opera house.